



Parent Liaison News

Newsletter #8. If you want to receive this electronically please let me know. It is my intent that you may find the following information of interest and perhaps useful for discussion during Parent Advisory Committee meetings or for your newsletters. Please copy and share!

Public Hearings/Public Comment

Based upon changes that were made from the previous Rules, it is necessary to update several documents that implement these Rules. The following documents have been revised and presented for a period of public comment through October 31, 2002.

- « ISD Plan Criteria
- « Monitoring Standards
- « IEP Manual and Forms
- « Procedural Safeguards
- « Mediation Procedures
- « Procedures for conducting a hearing on objections to the ISD Plan
- « Procedures for the selection and appointment of hearing officers
- « New question and answer document to replace the official interpretations
- « Complaint Procedures
- « Policy for the Appointment of a Surrogate Parent for Special Education Services
- « Inclusive Education Position Statement

Keep watch for further updates on these documents.

Summer Institutes

I had the opportunity to attend several institutes/conferences during the summer months.

Transition Services Project Summer Institute was during July. Districts are urged to bring a parent as part of their team and I saw very few parents there. The Institute is full of ideas and information. A session, which I co-presented in, was about Parent Involvement and there were lots of people there with the comments that they couldn't get parents interested by the time their students hit transition age. Next year's Institute is being planned for July 13-16 in Grand Rapids.

I then attended a retreat for MI-Access where we worked on expanding the Curriculum Framework standards and benchmarks for Special Education.

Also, for MI-Access, I took part in a research project where we watched 180 teacher observations, read a short bio about each student and scored the test document. That was intense and interesting. Thank you to the 10 parents that answered the call to assist with this project.

The Statewide PAC Conference was held August 1-2 and was very nice. It was good to see everyone there and the information available and presentations was appreciated. One of the most interesting sections was having PAC's from each region talk about what they are planning for this year and/or what they did last year. So many people have such good ideas. Contact your Regional PAC Representative for further information regarding this. A list is attached.

The Michigan Association for Supervisors of Special Education (MAASE) Summer Institute was August 4-7. Following are notes from Jacques's address to MASSE.

Leadership in an Era of Standards-based Accountability – presented at MAASE by Jacquelyn Thompson, Ph.D., Director OSE-EIS notes

Talking about where Michigan stands when compared to other states. This information is from the U.S. Department of Education Statistics.

Graduation general education = 77%
Graduation special education = 42%
Ranking to other states 42 out of 50

Challenges – We must move:

- _ from deficits to strengths
- _ from labels to individual characteristics
- _ from overprotection to independence
- _ from separateness to inclusiveness
- _ from the IEP to a place in the community

Focus on Students and Learning! You all:

- contribute to our success as a state and nation
- are part of the solution – or the problem – every day

Please:

- « heed the data
- « analyze where you are
- « get at cause of current status
- « focus on outcomes
- « do what is proven to work
- « apply what you are learning
- « use your networks
- « become articulate in moving others ahead

I think that there is information for all of us just in these short notes. Sort of a wake up call for many. You can view all of her presentation by logging onto the web at:

www.mi.gov/mde

click on “About MDE”

click on “Programs & Offices”

click on “Special Education & Early Intervention Services”

You may want to bookmark once you reach this page as it can be hard to find.

State Board of Education

I think that it is important that we know something about the State Board of Education. Attending one of their meetings is very interesting. You can find out more about the SBE by logging onto the web at: www.michigan.gov/mde and clicking on the State Board of Education button.

Their strategic goal for 2002-2003 is:

“Attain substantial and meaningful improvement in academic achievement for all students, with primary emphasis on chronically underperforming schools.”

They have several task forces that were formed earlier this year. They are:

Embracing the Information Age

Ensuring Excellent Educators

Integrating Communities and Schools

Elevating Educational Leadership

Early Literacy

All of these Task Force reports are available at their web site above.

Counterpoint

Do you receive a copy of Counterpoint from your ISD? If not, ask for a copy of the fall '02 issue when it is available. The spring issue of Counterpoint contained an article about the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act and No Child Left Behind. The entire article is worth reading.

This Act now requires states to demonstrate results through annual reading and math assessments for students in grades three through eight. Science will follow in a few years. States will be required to disaggregate data – including reporting the achievement of students with disabilities – to demonstrate achievement gaps between groups of students are closing. The Act also requires that students show adequate yearly progress – including students with disabilities.

One commenter states that the stakes have been raised significantly in terms of performance of kids with disabilities. For the first time, their performance on assessments in math and reading has direct implications for receipt of Title I funds. It brings the two accountability systems more in line.

Ask about Title I in your ISD. Do you know who the Title I Coordinator is? Maybe have this person come to one of your meetings and talk about this Act.

Transition Planning

Notes from presentation by Ed O'Leary

Focus of the IEP should be on the student and their future success. The IEP is not owned by school – but by student. It is about the student.

Currently – Imagine that the student is the football in a football game, we pass the ball hoping someone catches ---- Change to – Imagine student is the baton in a relay race, before you pass you make sure someone is there to take the baton.

Focus of Planning:

€ Involving the student meaningfully in the IEP/planning process.

€ Identifying student-desired post-school outcomes

- € Coordinating activities/strategies that lead to desired outcomes while the student is still in school.
- € Creating linkages among student, family, and community resources before the student leaves school.
- € Specifying who provides and pays for each of the activities/strategies.
- € Creating alternatives when services, programs, and supports do not work out or are not provided.

Students often have entry level jobs because they don't have the skills to move up the ladder. Entry level jobs are often part-time with no benefits. Is that where you want the student to stay? Vocational training with supports is needed.

Statement of Transition Service Needs at age 14 – the reason this statement was put into law was to try and help the drop-out rate by actively involving students in the planning of their course of study – this could motivate them to stay in school. It can be considered a long-range plan for adult life.

A diploma is not the end but a part of the journey – we are about the journey. If the outcome is only a diploma the unemployment rate hasn't changed for this student.

Ask about O'Leary's five-step process for IEP's. We used this process during my sons IEP's and it worked well. We focused on where Allie wanted to be after school and where he wanted to live and helped him write a plan to reach these goals.

Check out the TSP website at:

www.mitsp.org

A Parable of Peers

Author unknown

There once was a king who took a terrible tumble from his throne. Wanting to emphasize a weighty pronouncement, he leaned way over to snatch his scepter from the floor. Feeling his crown begin to slip, he grabbed also for it. With the scepter in one hand and crown in the other, he lost balance, twisted from the throne, and

crashed unceremoniously down the royal staircase.

Awakening from an uncertain darkness, he found himself surrounded by royal physicians. Trying to arise, he discovered he could no longer move his legs or arms. Yielding to the physicians, he was poked, pried, and bled. With great assurance, they finally pronounced him medically improved and departed. But, alas, he still could not walk or grasp.

As days passed, his condition did not improve. He still had the will to be king and to exercise the royal authority, but how could he do so? He could not walk or grasp.

Summoning his royal advisers, he entreated, "Help me. Tell me how to regain control of my subjects and my kingdom. Tell me what to do!" They conferred busily, and there began a long tale of pain and frustration.

"Send for the tournament trainers," they advised. He did, and was exercised, stretched, and sweat. They proclaimed that he was as fit as could be and departed, but still he could not walk or grasp. "What now shall I do?" he cried.

Once again they huddled in conference, this time emerging to advise, "Engage the royal counselors and teachers." He did, and was counseled, tested, trained, and taught. The counselors and teachers presented him with individualized plans and certificates of achievement, but still he could not walk or grasp. "What, oh what else can I do?" he cried.

In desperation, they gathered again. Pondering all that had gone before, they agreed there was but one thing left to do. "Summon the royal entertainers," they declared. He did, and was entertained, flattered, and engaged in activity, but still he could not walk or grasp. "What, oh what..." he cried, failing even to make his point.

And it came to pass that an aging king from a neighboring state stopped by to give his regards. Finding his friend severely confused and distraught, he shared personal learning from a lifetime of tribulation and trial.

"Please, my friend," he said, "look to what it is you yet can do, not to what others say you cannot. True, you may not walk or grasp, but surely you can rule. You can still hear cases, give judgments, and wisely

guide your subjects and kingdom. Develop your own plan for what you will do.”

Before long, our king was once more exercising the authority of his throne. “My neighbor,” he declared, “was able to do what all the royal experts could not. It was only he who had been where I am and truly heard what I said.”

“I needed what the physicians, the trainers, the counselors, and the entertainers did for me. But, they could not do what **I** must do – and, what only I can do. They could not see my dreams, set my values, and live my life. It took a peer to share what he had learned – that a king must take charge to be in control, and must make decisions to rule. Advice is but opinion, but decisions are control. Only I can truly take charge of my life and determine what it is that I shall do!”

Kinder, Gentler Schools

Education Week 10/24/01 (with permission)

A foundation in Denver has one purpose and one alone; to show people how to make the world a kinder place. Schoolchildren are spreading its gospel faster than just about anyone.

The Random Acts of Kindness Foundation has enlisted more than 800,000 students and 40,000 teachers in a variety of projects from the simple to the complex. Any teacher or administrator who wants to incorporate kindness into a classroom or school can obtain a thick packet of ideas and materials from the 6-year-old philanthropy, free of charge.

“Kindness is the foundational value on which all the character traits are built. It’s also a concept that can easily be integrated into all parts of a school curriculum. We’ve had home economics classes take cookies to firefighters,” said Molly Stuart, the president of the foundation, which is financed entirely by one anonymous benefactor.

The foundation hopes to spread the idea during its annual Random Acts of Kindness Week, November 11-17. Among the materials it will supply for schools are a teacher’s guide with suggestions about how to incorporate kindness into all subjects and lists of project ideas tailored by age group. More information is available at:

www.actsofkindness.org

Michigan Parent Handbook

There is a handbook available from the Michigan Resource Center 800-626-4636

www.WeAreMRC.org

This handbook is meant to provide information and suggestions to you as you raise or work with children. It is a basic guide, with an emphasis on preventing alcohol, tobacco, and other drug problems. It also suggests other sources for help and information. It is provided to suggest information, skills, and sources for help with parenting.



WEB Sites of Interest

Have you visited the MDE-OSE/EIS web site lately? The site has changed along with the address! We keep it updated and have lots of information that you may find helpful. We have lots of links to other sites.

www.michigan.gov/mde

A Parent List serve is available from the MDE site also. www.michigan.gov/mde

Click left side button Parents & Family
Click left side button children with special learning needs

Click on special education

You will find the parent list serve, SPAC news, and the Parent Liaison newsletters there.

Check out a new site –

www.bridges4kids.org lots of information can be found here.

[Http://www.ncset.org/topics/accommodation/?topic=9](http://www.ncset.org/topics/accommodation/?topic=9) you will get a message that this site is not available but type in the search box – “accommodations” and it will come up.

Accommodations (August 2002) Explores accommodations, which are changes made to classroom and testing materials and procedures to help students with disabilities learn and participate in tests on a level playing field with students without disabilities.

<http://www.tbitac.org/site/ResourceDetails.cfm?id=1027524192>

Section 8 Made Simple: Using the Housing Choice Voucher Program to Assist People with Disabilities (2002)

Helps individuals with disabilities find housing through the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program. It discusses eligibility, the waiting-list process, screening and verification, determining tenant payments, getting and keeping a voucher, reasonable accommodations, and homeownership assistance. A 12-page overview of the guide is available in the TBI Tool Box at the Web site.

Conference Dates and Information

Navigating Your Journey

October 12, 2002

Conference for parents, contact Traverse Bay Area ISD, Special Education office at 231-922-6228

Co-sponsored with the TBA PAC

Park Place Hotel

Traverse City, MI

Michigan Rehabilitation Conference

October 17-19, 2002

Grand Traverse Resort

Traverse City

Contact Harry Smith at MARO

517-484-5588

Learning Disabilities Association (LDA)

Annual Conference

November 2002

Kellogg Center, East Lansing

Contact: LDA 888-597-7809

Email: ldami@aol.com

Comments from the Parent Liaison

Thank you to everyone who expressed condolences and/or helped Ed and I last February when my son, Allie, passed away. This was a very difficult time for us. I am still committed to helping all students reach their very best. This event in my life is the reason there was only one Liaison Newsletter last year. My apologies. I am interested in attending your PAC meetings. I would love to hear about your PAC and the discussions that you have

around issues. I have attended several ISD PAC meetings and some local PAC meetings across the state.

If your PAC has a newsletter or if you have some back copies on hand, please send them to me and ask that I get added to your mailing list. I know that several PACs do newsletters and I would really like to have the opportunity to help promote the hard work that you do in producing your newsletters. Thank you!

Does your PAC membership include voting members from organizations? Which ones? How do you define membership? How long are your terms for the PAC? These are some of the questions that I frequently hear. If you have the time, please let me know what you do. I appreciate the information. As always, I am happy to hear from you. Let me know how your PAC is doing. Any questions? I will try to find the answer!

Thank you for reading and sharing!

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The Parent Liaison News is provided as a resource to parents who are active in Parent Advisory Committees and other school-based activities. Reference to web-sites, publications and other sources of information does not infer endorsement by the Michigan Department of Education.

The very essence of leadership is that you have to have a vision. You can't blow an uncertain trumpet. Theodore Hesburgh

People may not remember exactly what you did or what you said but, they will always remember how you made them feel.